DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 662 CS 010 283

AUTHOR Shefelbine, John
TITLE Parents Sharing Books: Motivation and Reading.
INSTITUTION Indiana Univ., Bloomington. Family Literacy Center.
SPONS AGENCY Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 35p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Books; *Childrens Literature; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Learning Motivation; Middle Schools; *Motivation Techniques; *Parent Participation; *Parent Role; Parents as Teachers; Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Attitudes; Reading Habits; Reading Materials; Recreational Reading; *Student Motivation
IDENTIFIERS *Reading Motivation

ABSTRACT

This booklet focuses on reading motivation, especially on specific steps to motivate the middle school child to learn. The main topics explored are: finding or making time for reading for pleasure; filling or flooding the house with interesting reading materials; and reading as a way of life. Practical questions from parents are answered and activities are described which can be used at home. Annotated lists of recommended books for preteens, teens, and parents are also included in the booklet. (MG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 234662

Parents Sharing Books

Motivation and Reading

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mitzi Skerrit

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Family Literacy Center

2

This booklet has a companion audio tape on "Motivation and Reading."

Parents Sharing Books is published by the Family Literacy Center at Indiana University, 2805 E. 10th Street, Suite 150, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698. Copyright © 1990.

The Parents Sharing Books project is funded by the Lilly Endowment.

This issue of *Parents Sharing Books* focuses on motivation, especially on specific steps you can take to motivate your middle school child to learn. We answer some practical questions from parents and describe activities you can use at home. We also recommend a few books your teen or preteen may enjoy.

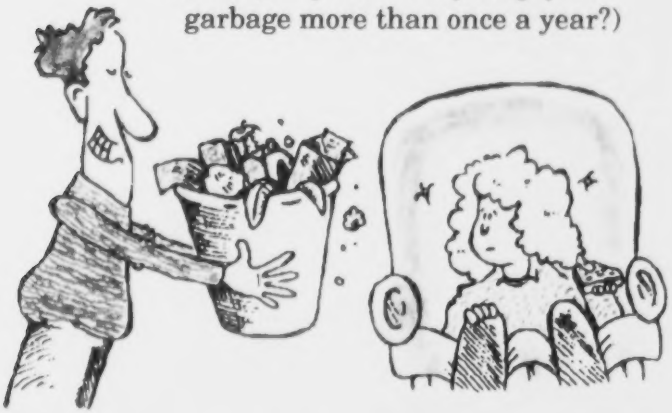
On Side B of the companion audio cassette, we have recorded a conversation between some middle school students. These middle schoolers discuss a couple of books. Listen to what is important to your middle school child when it comes to discussing books. You might even listen to the tape with your child.

On Side A, we have asked John Shefelbine, author, teacher, and parent, to share his ideas on motivating teens to read. He also has a book for parents on junior high school reading that is filled with the kind of practical advice and activities that result from his experience as a teacher in many parts of the United States, including Texas and Alaska. Presently he is a professor at Columbia University in New York City. Let's now enjoy Dr. John Shefelbine as he shares his ideas on motivating teens to read.

Motivation, Hunting, and Reading

by John Shefelbine

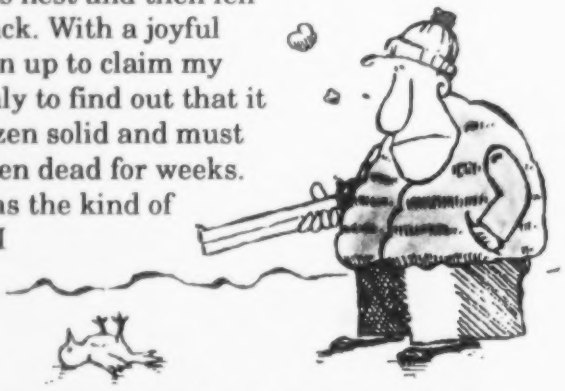
As a teacher and a parent, I have been concerned about my students' and my own kids' motivation. Why don't they do what is right and good for them? Why don't they read more? (For that matter, why don't they empty the garbage more than once a year?)



Sometimes I even ask the same questions about myself. Why have I put off reading that self-help book on procrastination? Why, as a kid, did I prefer any kind of outdoor activity over reading for pleasure? Thinking about the nature and meaning of motivation in my own life sometimes makes me more sympathetic towards others who don't seem to be as motivated as I want them to be.

Years ago, when I was in VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), I lived in a remote Eskimo village in western Alaska. There I learned many new things—dog sledding, Eskimo dancing, fire bathing. However, my experiences as a hunter of seals and birds were not so wonderful. For one thing, hunting took a lot of time—more time than I really had available. I particularly remember hunting ptarmigans, a small chicken-like bird that arrived early in spring.

Once, I went out alone with my not-too-trusty and rather rusty .22 (everything rusted in the damp salt air). I spotted a ptarmigan. In my white camouflage outfit, I quietly circled around downwind and then crawled on my hands and knees through the slushy snow until I was amazingly close to the target. I took aim and fired. My shot was a good one, for the bird was lifted slightly out of its nest and then fell right back. With a joyful cry, I ran up to claim my prize only to find out that it was frozen solid and must have been dead for weeks. That was the kind of hunter I was. While never too keen about hunting to begin with, over time I became even less interested. And, in the opinion of my Eskimo friends, I seemed to have a real motivation problem when it came to hunting.



I share my Eskimo story because it helps illustrate one aspect of motivation—*importance*. I lacked interest in part because hunting was not that important to me, and it had not been part of my life before I went to Alaska. In somewhat similar ways, importance also seems to influence whether, and how much, students and adults are motivated to read for pleasure.

We Cannot Force Kids to Be Motivated but We Can Encourage Them

I've told you about instances in my life where I was not very motivated. Can you think of any examples that apply to you? Do you wish you could cut down on the amount of salt or fat in your diet? Do you think you should exercise more or do that project that you have been putting off?

Recognizing our own struggles with motivation can help us understand how motivation works in the lives of middle school students.

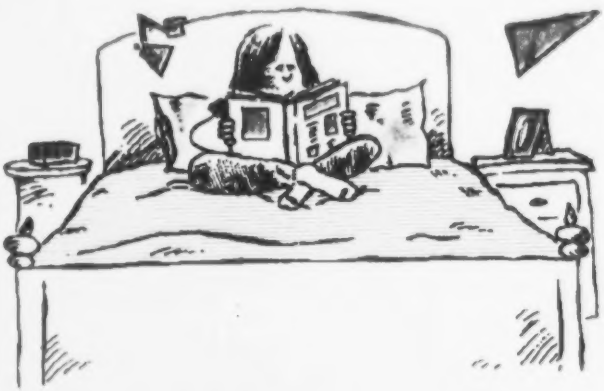
As a parent, I have sort of learned (sometimes I still forget) that motivation comes from *within* and that it is not possible to force or demand it from the outside. Some kids read all the time. But some don't. Sure, those kids that don't read will read some if we make an ugly enough scene, but they are unlikely to read *much*, and they probably will not choose to read on their own. Even outside rewards such as money do not truly motivate because the reward itself ends up being more important than the reading.

So, when it comes to reading for pleasure, middle school students should be motivated on the inside, which means that we must find ways of encouraging them to sense that reading is important and worthwhile. How can this be done? I do not have any easy answers, but here are three suggestions that I have followed with my own kids.

Finding or Making Time to Read for Pleasure

My sense is that a majority of students have found reading to be enjoyable at some point in their lives. Why then do so many stop reading during middle school? In a survey at one school, a large number of students reported that they still liked to read but that they simply did not have enough time to do everything they wanted to do. Sports programs before and after school, increased amounts of homework, television shows, music lessons, and a host of other extracurricular activities all competed for these students' limited "free" time. For pre-teens and teens, socializing with other students becomes especially important, and that kind of activity is understandably more attractive than reading, to which they assign a lower priority. The television is also a strong draw for pre-teens and teens. Research shows that the average middle school child spends 25-30 hours a week in front of the TV.

When the above pattern is true for our kids, it is helpful for us to understand that the real issue involves limited time rather than poor motivation. Many students say they do read, but only when there is nothing else to do. If this is the case, we parents can encourage students who are at least somewhat motivated by helping them find and make time during which there is nothing else to do. I'm not sure what to call this nothing-else-to-do kind of time—"quiet time," "mind time," "down time" (as in, "the computer is down and everything has to stop"). Take your pick or make up your own name. What counts is that we emphasize the need for time, thus allowing reading to occur more naturally without forcing or rewarding it in an artificial manner.



How to find quiet time?

An important first step is to sit down together, explain the need for quiet during reading time, and then cooperatively work out what times are best. Here are some specific suggestions:

- Limit TV use for the family as a whole, and consider having times when everyone reads.
- Plan for extra reading during the off-season when sports are not in full swing.
- Take along books and magazines during the million short trips of your family taxi service.
- Install and fill a magazine rack in the bathroom.
- Pack up a bunch of reading materials for any family vacations.

I consider these and other ideas at greater length in a booklet, *Encouraging Your Junior High Student to Read*, available soon from ERIC.

Filling or Flooding the House with Interesting Reading Materials

Middle school students have a wide variety of interests that range from teen issues (romance, fashions, and "problems") to sports to science fiction to cars and computers to music to comics to offbeat humor. Surrounding them with books, magazines, and other reading materials that reflect these interests makes reading more attractive, more important, and therefore more likely to occur.

Capitalize on the motivation that is already there because the interests are there! Our job is to try to meet or match those interests.

I use the words "flooding," "filling," and "surrounding" to stress that we are talking about a *lot* of materials that vary both in subject matter and in so-called "quality." Magazines are particularly appealing because they are up-to-date and often specialize in topics that are interesting to middle school students, for example, teen living, skateboarding, and movie and rock stars. As far as books

are concerned, do not overlook the many inexpensive paperback novels in which characters in their early or middle teens "live" adolescence in a realistic manner. In libraries, this type of writing is in a section called "young adult literature."

- Rather than telling middle school students to go find something to read, we parents need to become actively involved in the search. If your kid is sometimes too busy to go to the library or bookstore, go by yourself and bring back several "sure bets" from which to choose.

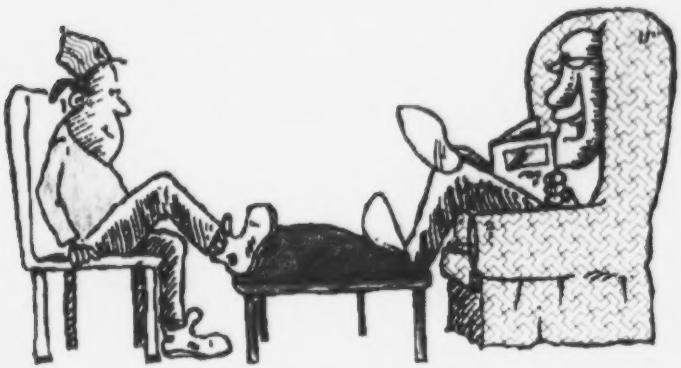
- Libraries are a good place to start. Ask for help, especially from someone who specializes in young adult literature.

- Note what magazines your middle school student looks through at the doctor's office or at the grocery store. These might be worth buying. To keep costs down, share and trade reading material with other families.
- Talk to other parents and their kids about the books they have found to be particularly good.
- Look for inexpensive books at garage sales and used bookstores.

Reading as a Way of Life

Most kids have enjoyed reading at some times in their lives. This is not necessarily true for everyone. Some have never found reading to be very enjoyable, perhaps because they were poor readers or because in school they only took turns reading out loud and never read on their own for pleasure, or because reading for pleasure was not important in the home. A love of reading for its own sake (now that's high motivation) develops by having many pleasurable reading experiences over a long period of time.

One of the best ways that we parents can motivate our kids to read is to read *to* them starting from the time they are babies and continuing through their middle school years. Pick material that is challenging and above their reading level but that is still interesting. This opens up the world of reading in a most enjoyable manner and, over time, motivates students to read for pleasure



on their own. I estimate that Janet and I have read to each of our own three kids a minimum of five hours a week. That amounted to over 1,500 hours by the time they reached first grade, and over 3,000 hours by the time they got to middle school. Some beginning readers, on the other hand, have been read to less than one hour.

Don't be discouraged if you haven't read much to your kids. It's never too late to start. And if you don't have the time, or cannot read so well yourself, try to have others do the reading at school, at the library, or in your community.

Just as reading to students needs to be "lived" over long periods of time, so does reading for pleasure by students themselves. Start as soon as they can read with ease and independence (as early as first grade or as late as third). Enjoyable experiences and routines early on will greatly increase the chances that reading for pleasure will continue through and beyond the middle school years. Those of us with younger kids can start preparing for their middle school years now.

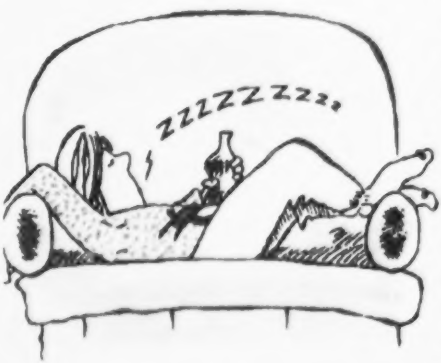
In Conclusion: Reading versus Hunting

My hunting example wasn't all that appropriate because, as you could probably tell if you read between the lines, I wasn't a very good hunter and my heart just wasn't in it. There are, however, many middle school readers who *can* read and who do enjoy reading *interesting* books and magazines when they have the *time*. The motivation is there; we just need to encourage the desire to read and know and the results will follow.

Questions

All parents have questions and need answers about the academic growth of their children. Here are some questions that parents frequently ask about how to motivate their teens and pre-teens.

I don't know what is wrong with my 14-year-old daughter. She is not interested in school and doesn't care if she does well or not. What can I do to get her interested in improving?



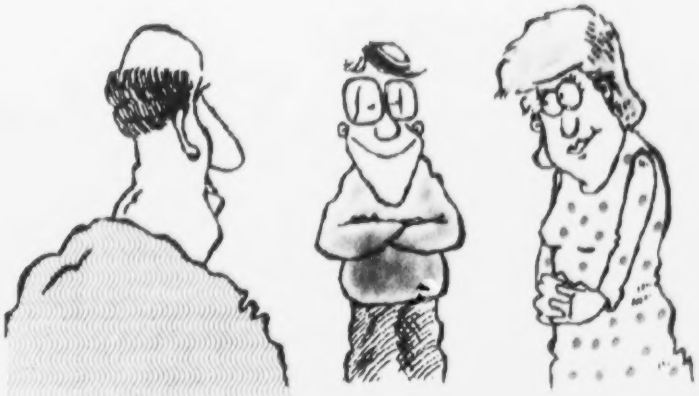
Have you asked your daughter why she does not care about school? Parents and adolescents need to discuss what goes on at school as well as what goes on at home. Your daughter needs to know that you are interested in her—what problems she may be having at school as well as things that may be bothering her at home. I would encourage you and your daughter to meet with her teachers to discuss this lack of self-motivation.

Sometimes lack of motivation can stem from your child's lack of self-worth—a feeling of not being adequate or good enough to fulfill expectations. It may be fear of failure. Don't let any problems—school or home—spoil your child's chances of success. Meet non-success head-on. Find out what it is that may be causing this lack of interest and then work with her teachers on how to replace this sense of failure with success.

My son is not interested in doing things with the family anymore. What can I do to increase his involvement?

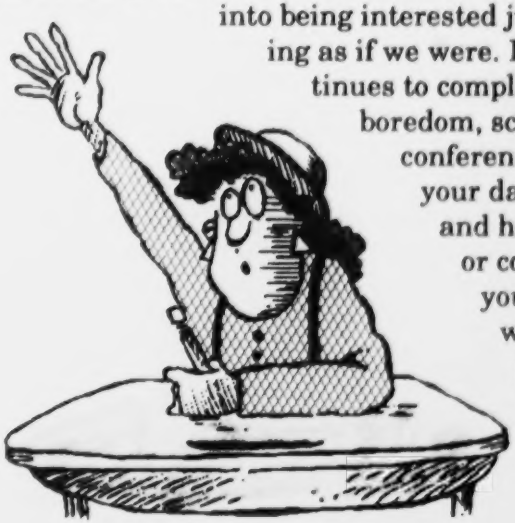
During adolescence, your son's friends are his most important source for social support. It is a time when most children want a new relationship with parents. They usually want increased freedom from parents and rules. The move toward the peer group and away from the family often leads to conflict and sometimes rebellion. Try to minimize this conflict by working out a reasonable plan or schedule for family activities and for doing things with friends. Perhaps a calendar or schedule on the refrigerator or some other noticeable place will

enable everyone in the family to write their activities, appointments, and what-not. This calendar or schedule of events will help you plan time for family activity. The schedule may change from week to week—we all know that job, home, and school can get pretty hard to juggle. You may need to set rules for the entire family to go by, such as, everyone sits down together for the evening meal, a certain time during the weekend is reserved for family, school nights have a curfew different from weekends, and so on. Let your son know his presence and role in the family is important. When the family is together, make those times as enjoyable as possible. If your home provides a comfortable refuge away from friends, your son will likely continue to look upon his family as a source of comfort and protection.



My daughter does well in school, but does not like school because she says it is boring. Do you have any suggestions for me so I can help her?

Teens sometimes say they are bored because it is the "cool" or the "right" thing to say, when actually they really do like school. Some children are bored by choice. If your daughter expects something is going to be boring, then it probably will be boring. Encourage your teenager to become engaged in what is going on and to make an effort to be interested in whatever is at hand. As adults, we know that not all work is entertaining. On the other hand your daughter may feel that she already knows about the things that are being discussed in class. Encourage her to extend herself—to develop a sense of inquiry, curiosity, and discovery beyond what she may think she already knows. Ask her to act interested and see if that doesn't relieve her boredom. We can often trick ourselves into being interested just by acting as if we were. If she continues to complain about boredom, schedule a conference with your daughter and her teacher or counselor so you can all work out a plan together.



Activities

As parents, we are looking for activities that will benefit our teens and pre-teens. Here are some activities you can do with your adolescent for fun.

- Watch or attend a sporting event together in which you are both interested. Talk about the plays or players with your child. Listen to her comments and discuss your point of view about the game or a play. Tell her how much you enjoyed being with her and sharing this event, and before the game is over make plans for the next event you can attend together or for reading about the game or the players. Newspapers often publish statistics you can discuss.

- Take a special shopping trip, maybe for school clothes or for a specific item like a swimsuit. Set aside enough time to have lunch at a special place or a favorite restaurant. Discuss the styles of clothes and which ones you like or don't like. Allow your teens to express what they think.

Maybe you could get a teen fashion magazine to use for your conversation about shopping.

- All children need to be touched, but older kids might be embarrassed by hugs and kisses. It doesn't have to be a bear hug all the time. Try a pat on the back or a peck on the cheek.

- Be involved in your teenager's life by being involved in his hobby. If he has an interest in music, try listening to some of his favorite groups. If he is on the track team, go to his meets, help him practice, or read a book about the sport and share it with him.

- Don't wait for the school to cover every topic your teen will have questions about, like sex, drugs, or abortion. Get a book or a movie which discusses the topic and share it with your child. Discuss what happens to the characters and what you would have done and allow your teen to express what he would have done, too. Then talk about some of the possible consequences of your choices.

Books for Parents

Stop Struggling with Your Teen, Evonne Weinhaus and Karen Friedman. Brief, easy-to-read guide for parents to help them improve communication with their teens. Includes ideas to develop responsible behavior in children.

Comics to Classics: A Parent's Guide to Books for Teens and Preteens, Arthea J.S. Reed. A parent's guide to help select books for teens and preteens. Topics include preadolescent and adolescent reading; buying, borrowing, and selecting books; reading aloud; and book discussions. Also provides lists of books divided by genre.

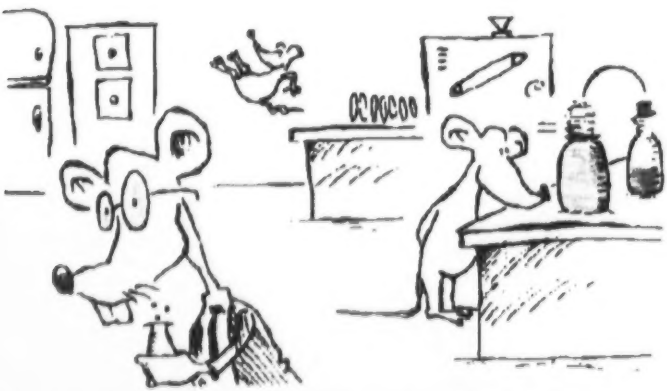
How to Survive Your Adolescent's Adolescence, Robert C. and Nancy J. Kolodny, Thomas E. Bratter, and Cheryl Deep. Presents fundamental principles of parenting including nurturing, prevention strategies, problem solving, self-awareness, and communication. Discusses issues facing the teens of today, as well as traditional problems of adolescence. Gives advice to aid parents in locating professional help.

Help! for Parents of Teenagers, Jean Illsley Clark, Sara Monser, Gail Nordeman and Harold Nordeman. Describes practical ideas for problems encountered by parents of teens. Gives background information on developmental stages during adolescence, along with how-to suggestions for dealing with teenagers.

Books for Teens and Preteens

Adventure

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH, by Robert C. O'Brien. Mrs. Frisby must move her mouse family, so she turns to her deceased husband's friends, the rats of NIMH. They are not ordinary rats, however. They have been caged in a laboratory for several years, where scientists' experiments have turned them into intelligent creatures. Together they undertake the adventure and conquer the odds.



From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, by E.L. Konigsburg. Claudia wants to teach her parents to appreciate her, so she runs away. She takes her younger brother, Jamie, and together they hide in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Trying to discover the artist who created a beautiful statue leads them to Mrs. Frankweiler and her mixed-up files.

Historical Fiction

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, by Mildred Taylor. Cassie Logan is growing up in Mississippi during the depression. Her family owns the land where they live, and the White people want to take it away from them. Cassie's strength is tested as she faces the conflicts which surround her and the prejudices that threaten to hurt her family.

My Bother Sam Is Dead, by James L. and Christopher Collier. Tragedy strikes the Meeker family during the Revolution. Although the town is divided, the family tries to remain neutral. Then their sixteen-year-old son joins the rebel forces against his parents' wishes.

Fantasy

A Wrinkle in Time, by Madeleine L'Engle. Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which help Meg, Charles, and Calvin transcend time to rescue Mr. Murray. To save her brother Charles from the powerful Dark Thing, Meg must use something she has that IT does not have.

Watership Down, by Richard Adams. When their warren is doomed, a small group of brave adventurers seek out a new home. They face dangerous perils, deceptive foes, hostile territory, injuries, and "Hrududil" to find a place to begin a new life.

Friendship and Family

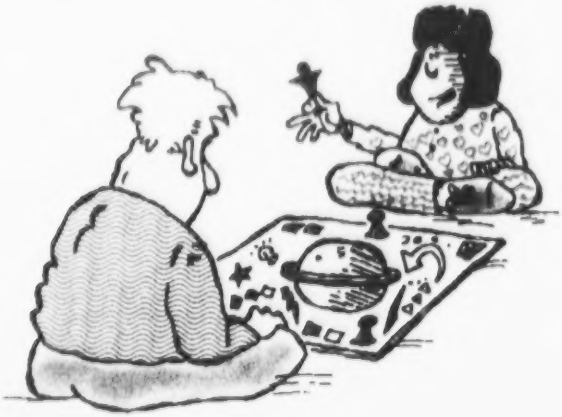
The Cat Ate My Gymsuit, by Paula Danziger. Marcy Lewis doesn't really like school; she thinks she is fat, and is worried about pimples. She becomes close to her English teacher, whom the school suspends because of her unusual teaching methods. Marcy must stand up for what she believes, even though her father is against her.

The Pigman, by Paul Zindel. Lorraine and John become friends with Mr. Pignati. They visit him, go with him to the zoo, and learn the secret about his wife. While Mr. Pignati is in the hospital, the kids have a party in his home. The party gets wild, and John and Lorraine must face the consequences of their actions and come to terms with their guilt.

Science Fiction

Justice and Her Brothers, by Virginia Hamilton. Justice Douglass is only eleven, but she can sense something strange and unnatural. She and her older twin brothers strive to come to grips with their supernatural powers. This is the first book in the Justice Cycle.

Interstellar Pig, by William Sleator. Zena is going to teach Barney a new game. On this game board there are aliens trying to control the galaxy. Then Barney discovers the truth; this is not a just a game and what happens could alter the fate of the universe.



Mystery

Elephants Can Remember, by Agatha Christie. Hercule Poirot and Ariadne Oliver probe into the twelve-year-old deaths of Lord and Lady Ravenscroft. The police claim it was a double suicide, yet there are hints from the doctor, schoolmistress, and an old woman that point to some other explanation.

Wolf Rider, by Avi. Andy picks up the phone, and a person who calls himself Zeke says he just killed Nina. The police, Andy's Dad, and his friends think that it is just a prank call. Andy sets out to prove everyone wrong, and becomes the new victim.

Nonfiction

Autobiography and Biography

Anne Frank, by Vanora Leigh. Anne Frank, her family, and another Jewish family were forced to hide from the Nazis. This account draws from Anne's diary and describes what her life was like during the two years in hiding before they were discovered and arrested.

The Real Tom Thumb, by Helen Reeder Cross. Charles Sherwood Stratton was a very talented man who was not tall in stature. He was so small he was given the name "Tom Thumb." P.T. Barnum discovered him and made him famous. This book tells about his career, homes, family, travels, and his wife, Lavinia.

Sports

Bruce Weber's Inside Baseball, by Bruce Weber. Covers American League's and National League's all-pro teams, team previews, batting and pitching leaders, and statistics from the prior year.

The Illustrated Sports Record Book, by Zander Hollander and David Schulz. Recounts more than three-hundred fifty records, along with stories and photos. Covers basketball, golf, baseball, football, boxing, hockey, swimming, cycling, auto racing, speed skating, tennis, track and field, and horse racing.

Now that you have read this booklet, listen to Side B of the companion audio cassette. It is a discussion among some middle school students about books they have read. Their interests and their thoughts may give you ideas for your own book discussions.

Books of Special Interest to Parents

How Can I Prepare My Young Child for Reading? by Paula C. Grinnell. Presents ideas to assist parents in preparing their children for reading. Focuses on children from birth through kindergarten ($1.75).

You Can Help Your Young Child with Writing, by Marcia Baghban. Suggests methods parents can use to help develop their children's writing at home. Offers writing and reading activities ($1.75).

Beginning Literacy and Your Child, by Steven B. Silvern and Linda R. Silvern. Recommends ways parents can participate in the development of their children's literacy. Provides activities for talking, reading, writing, and listening ($1.75).

Helping Your Child Become a Reader, by Nancy L. Roser. Provides suggestions for parents to help them encourage their children to read. Offers several practical activities for parents ($1.75).

Creating Readers and Writers, by Susan Mandel Glazer. Suggests that parents: (1) encourage the use of language; (2) build positive attitudes toward reading, writing, and speaking; and (3) demonstrate the purposes of literacy. Includes book suggestions classified by age groups ($1.75).

You Can Encourage Your High School Student to Read, by Jamie Myers. Offers practical ideas parents can use to encourage their teenagers to read more. Shows how reading can serve adolescents' needs,

and presents future needs that reading can fulfill ($1.75).

101 Ideas to Help Your Child Learn to Read and Write, by Mary and Richard Behm. Ideas are presented to help parents use resources from around the home to promote literacy. The activities are educationally sound and fun for the parent and child to do together ($6).

Parent Involvement Materials

Please send me:

Quantity

Parents Sharing Books

an audio journal for parents of middle school children

_____ *Motivation and Reading ($5)*

Parents and Children Together

an audio journal for children ages 4-10 and their parents

_____ *One-year subscription ($60 per year)*

The cost for a journal and matching audio tape each month is $6, or $60 for a one-year subscription. Quantity discounts are available for 20 or more copies. The price for libraries is $75 per year. The journal is also available without the audio cassette for $4 per issue, or $40 for a one-year subscription.

Back Issues of *Parents and Children Together:*

_____ *Linking Reading and Writing ($6)*

_____ *Family Storytelling ($6)*

_____ *Motivating Your Child to Learn ($6)*

_____ *Learning and Self-Esteem ($6)*

_____ *Discipline and Learning ($6)*

_____ *Holiday Reading ($6)*

Booklets:

_____ *How Can I Prepare My Young Child for Reading? ($1.75)*

_____ *You Can Help Your Young Child with Writing ($1.75)*

_____ *Beginning Literacy and Your Child ($1.75)*

_____ *Helping Your Child Become a Reader ($1.75)*

_____ *Creating Readers and Writers ($1.75)*

_____ *You Can Encourage Your High School Student to Read ($1.75)*

_____ *101 Ideas to Help Your Child Learn to Read and Write ($6)*

$ _____ *TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED (prices include postage)*

- OVER -

Name_____

Address_____

_____

City_____ State_____ Zip _____

❒ Check enclosed _____

(Please make checks payable to the
Family Literacy Center)

Credit Cards

❒ Visa
❒ Mastercard

Name on Card_____

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Family Literacy Center
Indiana University
2805 East 10th Street, Suite 150
Bloomington, Indiana 47408-2698
(812) 855-5847

Editorial Advisory Board:
Dr. Carl B. Smith, Director, Indiana University, Bloomington
Pat Brown, Indianapolis Public Schools
Alice Davis, Business Consultant, Indianapolis
Dr. Leo Fay, Indiana University, Bloomington
Dr. Jack Humphrey, Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp.
Teresa Jump, Indiana Parents Project
Amy Oxley, Indianapolis Public Libraries
Blanche Ryan, Indianapolis Public Schools
Dr. John Shefelbine, Columbia University

Editor: Michael Shermis
Writers: Marge Simic and Melinda McClain
Editorial Assistant: Melinda McClain
Production: Lauren Bongiani
Illustrations: Dave Coverly
Artwork: Melinda McClain and Ruth Fellingham
Voices in Order of Appearance:
Side A: Carl Smith, John Shefelbine, and Barbara Vultaggio
Side B: Dana Burton, Sandi Burke, Maria Sulgrove, Brett Bays, Jeremy Wren, David Hossler, Peter Hossler, Norma Collins, Kristen Collins
Studio Engineer: Rick Wudell, Indiana University

Parents Sharing Books is published by the Family Literacy Center.

For more information on the development of reading and language skills, write or call:

Family Literacy Center
Indiana University
2805 E. 10th Street, Suite 150
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
(812) 855-5847